

The Brotherhood

by warperchick

Category: Halo

Genre: Adventure, Hurt-Comfort

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2014-06-12 00:21:01

Updated: 2015-04-19 21:53:55

Packaged: 2016-04-27 04:05:11

Rating: T

Chapters: 5

Words: 12,926

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Thought to be the last of the Spartans, Master Chief is proved wrong when Doctor Halsey sends him out on a quest to find the last Spartans hidden in the stars to deliver the message of a new threat: ONI. The spooks threaten to decommission all active Spartans to integrate them into the normal human society. Takes place after Halo 4. OCs will be mentioned.

1. Prologue

****HELLO READERS! I bring to you a HALO story.****

****Now this little bunny was hopping around and I decided to allow it to nibble on my garden. I have a few of these chapters for this story done, but I am still going over them as they still have grammatical errors-according to my brother...****

****I am also a very avid Halo gamer. The first Halo is my fav, followed by Reach, then Halo 4. XD****

****Anyways, aside from my little fangirling squeal, onward!****

****R&R!****

****Disclaimer: I own the story plot not Halo or anything belonging to Bungie, 343, etc.****

PROLOGUE

****2245 Hours, November 16, 2557 (Military Calendar)****

Dr. Catherine Halsey sat rigidly within the chair her temporary room had. She had undergone many interrogations the past several months and she was under constant observation, but now, Dr. Halsey was away from her cage. The spooks had kindly allowed her to say final words to those she summoned to her room before they would take her

away.

It was that reason why she was nervous and unkempt. The woman was a mess, both emotionally and physically. Her once-combed hair was crinkled and the ends were split, her normally well-pressed clothes were wrinkled. The woman's fingers tapped the arm rest impatiently, checking the digital clock on the wall.

He was lateâ€”

Dr. Halsey almost jumped as the door was rapped twice.

"Come in." she said.

The man in MJOLNIR armor strode through once he palmed open the door, his familiar green-plated armor gleamed harshly under the florescent lighting. John was wearing his helmet, which was common for most eyes, and his head turned in the direction of the woman he had known his entire life.

"You wanted to speak to me, ma'am?" he asked as he drew himself closer to Dr. Halsey.

She stood up, almost hesitating as she took small steps towards him. She spoke delicately, "John," the SPARTAN waited. Dr. Halsey allowed a pregnant pause before opening her mouth to speak again, "to put things blunt, Chief, ONI no longer needs me and my services."

The Chief tilted his head slightly, a well-known signal for Dr. Halsey to further elaborate.

"The superiors at ONI intend to put me to sleep. For good." she watched him become rigid, his armor plating tightening, "They claim that my service is finished and because I have, I quote, "seen too much," within the next twenty-four hours, the Chief Medical Officer will give me the injection."

John stepped back, "They can't do that." he immediately stated with a firm voice, "I will not allow that to happen."

Dr. Halsey gave a small smile, but it soon became wiped away. She closed their space only slightly as she took a stride forward, "Listen to me, Chief. There is nothing that can be done. I do not want to walk up to the spooks and slaughter them; there is something much too serious happening. Now, promise me you will do something for me."

The man gave a hesitant nod, "What do you need?"

Dr. Halsey took a closer step, almost whispering as if the people outside were to hear. Such fools they were, leaving the woman with details in an unsecured room, "ONI intends to terminate the SPARTAN Program and integrate those left into normal human society. You and I know that will not end well." she slid her hand into her pants pocket briefly, removing a data chip from within. Her old hand touched one of John's armored ones and delicately slipped it into his matte palm. "When you leave, immediately dock off and go to these coordinates. You will find other SPARTANS from the other Armed Forces: Marines, Army, and Air Force. I have a message that must be relayed when you gather everyone. There are instructions for you as well."

"I had thought that I was the last SPARTAN within the program." underneath his helmet, he gave the woman an ever confused look. Too much information was being fed to him and he was choking.

Dr. Halsey smiled softly as she touched the side of his helmet, "You are the last SPARTAN within the Navy program in this current location. There are more of you out there, John."

Again, her smile faded.

"You must follow those instructions, John. The existence of the SPARTANS depends on it. You and the rest are not made to be integrated into the human life without a fight, without a war. The percent of a SPARTAN committing suicide is greater than the percent he will integrate into society." she said firmly, gripping the armored hand that held the chip with as much force as she could. It was barely a squeeze. Her old and worn eyes peered into his visor, looking past her own reflection, "All of my work, must not be in vain."

The Chief flexed his hand a fraction, keeping mind her hand was frail. He spoke after a small pause, "I assure you, Dr. Halsey, none of it will be."

"Good."

The woman allowed herself to wrap her arms around John's waist in one heart-felt hug, surprising the SPARTAN. He could only remain still as she laid her head against his chestplating, "Dr. Halsey?"

"I've seen you grow into the man that you are, John." she said quietly and the man felt shivers run up his spine, "Such a fine man that I have created. You have never ceased to amaze me ever since you were a child. Remember me."

John could not express any tears-he found no use for them, but his blood-pumping muscle ached. He slowly-carefully-wrapped his arms around the old woman, "I will remember you."

They remained that way until Dr. Halsey pushed back, wiping away small tears that threatened to spill out of the corners of her eyes.

"Go forth, John. You know what you must do."

The Chief nodded.

He pivoted around and John did not look back.

He never saw her again.

* * *

><p>Now, I realize this is quite short, but note that this is a prologue. I promise to give the chapters more length in the future.

****Welcome back my dear Halo fans!****

****I will try and type this as often as I can so that I have more chapters ready to go. I learned that the family will be finally getting internet for the house, so expected activity from me with my other stories.****

****Please read and review!****

****Disclaimer: I don't own Halo. OCs may show up from time to time.****

SECTION I " UNIONS

CHAPTER ONE

0315 Hours, November 25, 2557 (Military Calender) /

Entering the Double Helix Star System

John had flown across space on his own with the temporary AI installed with the chip as his company. The AI kept his questions to himself, preferring not to probe Master Chief with questions that may trigger tension; he could not help but glance at the SPARTAN in slight awe before returning his focus to the stars.

Spirals of questions had sprung within Chief when he first opened the content of the chip. It explained the other branches of the SPARTAN Program within the other Armed Forces. Like his military branch, the others were quite similar; the difference being were their attitudes. Marines SPARTANs had the scream-in-your-face tendency, Army SPARTANs were more levelheaded, and the Air Forces SPARTANs seemed to be cool-headed.

One of the questions he asked himself-and received no answer-was why he had not known about them? Were they kept a secret by ONI to prevent some sort of alliance between the diverse SPARTANs? Whatever the reasons were, Master Chief was bothered. He hated secrets.

The organization that held these four Armed Forces together was named Union of the SPARTAN Brotherhood-or the USB. It was founded near the same time the SPARTAN Program was created, the founder being none other than Catherine Halsey herself. She had left the establishment in hands of her trustworthy men and women who had Dr. Halsey's similar demeanor and they all swore to protect the USB and the SPARTANs to the best of their ability. This set of SPARTANs had their share of battles with Covenant in distant spaces that stretched further away from the natural distance many men and women were not accustomed to travel. There weren't any human settlements-the only one being planet Symphony where the USB resided.

ONI would have their grubby hands all over planet Symphony within a matter of days.

"Master Chief." the disembodied voice called the SPARTAN to attention, rousing from his inner musings.

"Report." came John's command.

The AI pulled up the star system they were in, focusing the attention to the planet rotating around the central star several planets away. "We will be arriving on planet Symphony soon, sir. ETA, two hours.

"Thank you."

The AI offlined his holo-form, flickering once.

The SPARTAN rested his head against the seat's head rest, lifting an armored hand to stroke his short hair and scratch lightly. Whenever the AI was online, he could not bring himself to look at the miniature man. Furthermore, he refused to speak to him. Neither of them spoke freely to one another; what was the point if the AI was going to be purged automatically? The Cole Protocol was to take effect after the message to all the remaining SPARTANs was relayed and purge every last bit of data Dr. Halsey had placed onto the chip. A more personal reason as to why the Chief did not engage with the AI: Cortana.

Cortana made him feel human, not just a man in a suit built to kill, not just... a machine.

His facial expression became pained as her words echoed: Don't make a girl a promise you can't keep.

He failed to save her, failed to take her to Dr. Halsey.

John swore to himself never to become emotionally attached to any other being, regardless if it breathed or not. He couldn't suffer another loss. Cortana's sacrifice affected him more than it should have. The Master Chief released a small sigh, staring at the small crevices in the ceiling than a normal human eye would have missed; questions continued to rouse in his mind.

The information on the chip stated that the deactivation of the SPARTAN Program was effective as of 1 December, 2557, and this allowed the transport ship to take it's time in arriving on planet Symphony. The Master Chief assumed that their ship was not slip-space compatible considering the travel-class of the ship; luckily for John, he had the advantage of leaving earlier than the ONI officials, who left a standard week after. John would arrive at planet Symphony with enough time to save the other SPARTANs from becoming decommissioned.

Although it was not performed, an active SPARTAN would not have the capacity to integrate into regular human society. Not only were they deadly-with or without their suits,-they were unable to socialize with civilians. News of SPARTAN integration would spread like wildfire and civilians would be capable of distinguishing a super-soldier from an average human.

John agreed with Dr. Halsey; he would not be able to cope with a new life he was not accustomed to.

He was trained to fight, trained to kill.

****I am back with another update so soon! Now, you probably won't expect another activity from me until chapter three decides to cut. I believe this is the longest chapter I have posted in all of my stories. I haven't really measured the word count...****

****As always, I do not own Halo. OCs are seen through this chapter.****

****I would like to thank one of my reviewers, Noble17, for offering some of his/her OCs. I really appreciate the aid! It gets old when my brother is giving me the S-number based on the amount of ammo he has in his clip on Battlefield 4. I am also in need of names-male or female, I don't care-for further use.****

****Enough of me ranting!****

****Read and Review!****

CHAPTER TWO

****0515 Hours, November 25, 2557 (Military Calender) /****

Double Helix Star System****, Planet Symphony****

The AI safely landed their transport onto the landing pad, stating to the Master Chief, "Transport has touched down. USB officials will be waiting outside, sir."

"Thank you." said the SPARTAN. He barely showed hesitation as he reached forward towards the console and retrieved the AI, pulling him out of the transport's systems. His armored hand went back behind his head and inserted the memory-processor matrix into the socket at the base of his neck-he had done this so many times before with Cortana's matrix. The ever familiar cold liquid sensation sent chills down the Master Chief's spine. The AI contemplated whether or not he should strike a conversation with the SPARTAN; current data collected from the man's mind gave the AI the impression John was nervous with him having access to his suit and mind, the reason unknown. He had no knowledge of the Master Chief and his affiliations with Cortana. The AI was programmed to deliver John to planet Symphony and deliver the last handful of SPARTANs a message from their creator before the Cole Protocol would purge him. The AI did not question his orders.

The Master Chief quickly adjusted to the new presence in his mind before he pivoted away from the ship's console and progressed aft. The aft door lowered in a timely manner and slowly, John could see the officials-four of them-standing patiently. Three of the officials were men and the fourth was a woman; they wore uniforms from their respective Armed Forces branches. Once the aft door finally settled on the platform, John stepped down and stopped in front of the officials, raising his arm in to a crisp salute.

The officials returned the salute, just as crisp, and dropped their arms in perfect unison.

"Master Chief," said the Navy Fleet Admiral as he craned his head back a fraction to see John in full height. The man looked to be in his mid-fifties, if not late forties. His black hair was cropped to standard and small patches of gray hair sprouted all around his head. With a brief look into the Admiral's eyes, the Master Chief noted

their old and weary gaze. "We have heard a great deal about you."

John only nodded.

"It is our greatest honor to welcome you to planet Symphony. I hope you find your stay quite entertaining." added the Admiral, "Before any further action, I am Fleet Admiral Collin Shahana."

The man to his left-the Marine-took his turn, jutting out his hand for John to accept and shake. The Master Chief did so respectfully, giving one firm-careful-handshake, "I am Marine General Jacob Yanskee."

General Yanskee nearly matched the SPARTAN in height and in bulk. For a man his age-assuming he was in his late forties-General Yanskee was quite the built man. From underneath his uniform, John could see muscles aching to be shown and put to great use. The Marine had no hair whatsoever, completely bald, and a gouging scar ran down the left side of his face where a Skirmisher had managed to lash a talon.

Next in line was a tall and slender man with focused, piercing brown eyes like that of a hawk. Blond hair was cut to standard length, uniform very well pressed and kept under perfect maintenance. He did not offer the Master Chief a handshake as General Yanskee had done, but offered the SPARTAN a respective nod before introducing himself, "I am General of the Air Force Chief Seth Detritus."

John returned the nod before stepping down the line and dropped his gaze to see the woman last in line. She had faint Asian features, eye corners elongated with small and fearless eyes beneath them. Her lips were pursed into a fine line as she lifted her head slightly, "I am Army General Hope Nakai."

"Greetings," said the Chief at last, bowing his head at the woman only a fraction. He pivoted slightly towards the other three men, "It is an honor to be amongst you. I was hoping this meeting would be under different circumstances."

The Admiral nodded, "We agree, Master Chief. I understand you have something from Dr. Halsey that you wish to tell our SPARTANs. What is it exactly?"

"A message," the AI in his interface shifted as John spoke, the AI creating a small grunt. "Of high priority. ONI threatens to shut down the SPARTAN program within a matter of days."

The men and woman tensed visibly-the Marine more so than the other as his muscles flexed within his neck.

"What of Dr. Halsey?" asked General Nakai.

John forced out the words, finding them quite painful to say, "As of 17 November, 2557 at 0700 hours, Dr. Halsey was given the injection."

John swore he heard the female utter "barbarians," but he could not be certain.

"In that case, please, Master Chief, follow us into the grand hall where we can rally our SPARTANs and hear this message." said General Yanskee as he broke from the orderly line and began to march towards the facility. The Master Chief could hear the Marine official bark an order into his receiver, "Notify all SPARTANs to gather in the grand hall, mark it as an urgent call. I want every single Marine, Airman, Seaman, and Army personnel present ASAP!"

John blinked in surprise as he heard the AI speak, "The Marine General is in charge of 'spreading the good word' and keeping the soldiers, SPARTANs, and the rest of the personnel well informed. He is also the head of security at this facility."

"What about the rest of them?" asked John as he turned off his external speakers.

"The General of the Air Force Chief controls what flies-quite typical of the branch he serves-and he monitors activity in the space surrounding the Double Helix Star System. The Fleet Admiral can be named as the co-worker with General Detritus and the Fleet Admiral also oversees the stars and recently, he finished hounding the stray Covenant forces within this star system. And lastly, the Army General manages all the training that goes on within the facility. She had a selected group of others under her command that assist in the creating of simulators for soldier, ODST, and SPARTAN alike. She has improved the effectiveness out in the field with seemingly real simulators." the AI further informed as he tapped into the readable files of the four officials.

"Have these SPARTANs fought the battles that I have seen?" the Master Chief asked.

The AI took a moment to reply, "Several of these SPARTANs have fought on Reach, many of which honorably died. The majority of them leak into missions and go undetected, thus, the possibility of these SPARTANs fighting missions alongside you or other SPARTANs is likely."

John went into his memories and tried to find a SPARTAN would could have been a possible leak. He removed the SPARTANs he had grown and trained with, but even then, he couldn't find one.

The AI spoke again, "Are you familiar with Noble Six, sir?"

The title was strikingly familiar, but the Master Chief did not think he was affiliated with the Noble face to face, "I have heard of him."

The disembodied voice continued, "He originated from this facility, served in the Naval unit. Quite the lone soldier as his profile reads."

John would not doubt it. He, too, was a lone soldier; he no longer had Cortana.

The grand hall was quite the spectacle.

From what John could recall, the hall had a very antique appearance. Colossal pillars reinforced with titanium A towered three stories, the ceiling arched and the center piece was a dome made of

lab-produced diamond and glass settled evenly between the ribs. Light refracted from the diamond as easily as a real one would and created a specter of colors all around the hall. There were two balconies above with railings made out of polished stone and designs swirled to and fro. Much to the Chief's surprise, a large red carpet rug claimed the majority of the stone floor.

Bodies poured in from all directions, quickly filling up space as the intercom spoke loudly, "All personnel, on and off duty, please report to the grand hall; priority: urgent. I repeat, all personnel, on and off duty, please report to the grand hall; priority: urgent."

An opening was created by the mass of men, women, and SPARTANs to allow the four officials and the Master Chief to head towards the front of the grand hall. The once quiet hall was soon filled with indistinct chatter and a wave of silence passed when the microphone was tapped by General Yanskee, "Ladies and gentlemen, I hope everyone is doing fairly well at this time. Let us not forget of our comrades who gave their lives to eradicate the Covenant in this system and the outer system. Their sacrifice came with a great victory and as far as I know, not a single alien breathes within a million light years of planet Symphony." he allowed a paused for the soldiers and SPARTANs to call their sounds of triumph. Their HOO-AHs shook the walls and pillars, and John felt goosebumps perk on his skin. General Yanskee continued, "But another threat has arisen from the shadows and the Master Chief Petty Officer will further inform us of this threat."

The silence remained deep as the attention went to the green-plated SPARTAN and John stepped towards the podium General Yanskee was standing previously before. Beneath the microphone was a socket and the Master Chief reached back to grabbed the matrix of the AI. The cold liquid sensation ran through his mind as the AI was removed; upon insertion, however, the lights dimmed and a projector screen covered the wall behind the officials and John.

Dr. Halsey filled the majority of the screen, her old eyes peered into the camera. As she spoke, her voice was full of anxiety and harsh urgency, "_My SPARTANs, fellow colleagues, and soldiers, I must be brief. Today, sixteen November year twenty-five fifty-seven at noon, ONI officials declared the SPARTAN Program will be discontinued effective one December year twenty-five fifty-seven. I have sent Master Chief Petty Officer Sierra one-one-seven to deliver this message: Leave planet Symphony and the facility the Union of the SPARTAN Brotherhood resides in. As far as I know, the departure date for the spooks is a standard week from today, thus meaning, ONI will arrive on precisely the first of December. I implore of all of you, do not engage in any affairs with the spooks. Do not attack, do not negotiate. ONI intends to decommission all active duty SPARTANs and integrate them into civilian life now that the Covenant is eradicated. My facility has been compromised and everything has been terminated and destroyed. To those in charge, activate Fall Out plan zeta-one through five. This message will be purged with the AI due to Cole Protocol. A last message to my SPARTANs: Remember me._"

Dr. Halsey's image vanished and the screen went dark as the lights came back on. The disembodied voice of the AI came through the speakers, "Cole Protocol initiated. Purging all data."

The grand hall began to echo the many voices that spoke in protest,

many of which-if not all-were not pleased with the discontinuation of the SPARTAN program. The officials behind the Master Chief were speaking quietly amongst one another and the green titan could hear them discussing something about activating Dr. Halsey's Fall Out plan. Then, General Detritus pivoted away from the small gathering of officials and said to the Master Chief, "Come with me, Chief. As per Dr. Halsey's orders, Fall Out plan zeta-five applies to you."

John obediently followed the Air Force General as he was led away from the grand hall and General Yanskee's booming voice immediately silencing the voices currently growling.

General Detritus lead the SPARTAN towards the end of the hall and called for an elevator, pressing the button on the wall.

"I understand, Master Chief, that all of this is sudden news for you." stated the General.

John nodded, "You are correct, General."

The thin man continued, "You have many questions that may or may not be left unanswered after today. One of which being why you and your squadron of SPARTANs were not informed of the presence of these SPARTANs." he paused, stepping into the elevator as the doors opened. The armored man strode in after the General. "Unfortunately, that question could only be answered by Dr. Halsey herself. I, too, questioned why she did not combine the separated Naval SPARTANs with the USB."

John released a faint huff.

"Right now, Master Chief, all we have to do is follow Dr. Halsey's Fall Out plan zeta-one through five."

"If I may, General," the SPARTAN waited for the official to grant him permission to continue. He received the go-head and John finished his question, "What is Dr. Halsey's Fall Out plan zeta-one through five?"

The elevator stopped and the doors swished open. The men stepped out and the General replied as they continued down the hall, "Zeta-one: Download and secure all gathered data, and purge the remaining files from the system's hard drive. If necessary, purge all data. Zeta-two: Bring all transports online and prepare for building evacuation; board every man and woman, and secure all available weaponry on board. Zeta-three: Destroy evidence of every MJOLNIR modification created and equip all SPARTANs with their Fall Out suits. Save extra suits for further modification or replacement. Zeta-four: detonate and eradicate all traces of the USB facility. Zeta-five... you will soon see, Master Chief. Dr. Halsey had something special for you should this day under this circumstance come to arrive."

The Master Chief was slightly bothered by the fact that the General did not tell him up front what Zeta-five was and how in what way it pertained to him. Yet, as the obedient man he was, he did not press the General further; the General led the SPARTAN to the end of the hall, passing several security checks and arriving at a door read: HIGH CLASS AUTHORIZATION ONLY.

General Detritus had his retina scanned, along with his fingerprints

on both hands, and a voice verification. Once the permission was granted, a disembodied female voice spoke, "Zeta-five initiated."

"Please, Master Chief, enter." said the General, side-stepping to allow the SPARTAN enter first.

Quite surprised that a high ranking officer-and official-was giving him first entry, he hesitated, but entered otherwise. Cautious steps slowly brought the Chief further into the dimmed room, but before his eyes could adjust, the lighting became brighter and the scene was revealed to him.

In a solid glass container was a Mark Fall Out suit, black armor glistening under the xenon lights; it had a similar variations with the Mark VI MJOLNIR armor, such as the helmet and the overall body work. The container itself was underneath the standard machine that aided in the removal and applying of the heavy suits. Next to the container was a table that contained a wide arrangements of human and alien weaponry with a locker full of their respective ammunitions.

The Master Chief pivoted back around towards the Air Force General as the other spoke, "The Fall Out suit has highly advanced systems, originally it was to be named Mark VII, but Dr. Halsey decided to make this suit the back-up suit. Tested time and time again, the Fall Out suit has a high capacity subspace where you can store up to five small firearms and three heavy firearms. The rings around the the wrists are smaller compartments for grenades and ammunitions, and when you've run out of ammunition on your weaponry, they will be immediately supplied to your reloading hand. Dropping weapons, however, involves a swift command to the main processor and you can choose to drop the weapon of your choice. You can carry a weapon on your back, like standard suits and a grenade holder is still in place. This suit can be wearable in space, submerged in water, and in any sort of toxicity. The shields are at a times four recharge rate and have an overshield. There is a reinforced standard jetpack and sprint capability. Additional abilities can be added on, but the limit is four armor capabilities."

Master Chief looked back at the pristine armor and the wide array of weapons, appalled. Yet, he had to ask, "Is there a downside to the suit?"

General Detritus replied, "It can be operable by a SPARTAN alone, but for optimal performance, an AI must be boarded to assist in controlling the main processor. Without a smart AI, the percentage for performance sits at a 79 percent."

Master Chief swung back around, brows furrowed together as his eyes narrowed underneath the helmet. He growled, "I do not want it, General."

"Dr. Halsey would have insisted."

"Just because she would have insisted does not give me adequate reason to utilize the suit, General. I cannot operate another suit with someone in my head." huffed the Master Chief. He turned away from the General and glared daggers into the Fall Out suit. Before the mention of an AI, he had considered trading in his suit for the

one in front of him, but now it was out of the question. He would not have an AI in his head ever again. The pain was too great with Cortana.

The Air Force General walked around the SPARTAN towards the computer database on one wall of the room. Master Chief's eyes followed the slender man, watching his thin fingers type along on the holographic keyboard once the monitor came to life. General Detritus spoke calmly, as if he had expected the reaction from the Master Chief, "Cortana was important to you, was she not?"

When the SPARTAN did not reply, the General repeated, "Was she not, SPARTAN?"

John held in the growl as he answered, "She was, General."

There was a brief silence between the two men, the only noise being the holographic keyboard. General Detritus turned away from the computer, pivoting on heel and raising his head to see the SPARTAN, "Listen to me, Master Chief. I do not know if you comprehend you are only human. Being human, you become attached to things, people, or animals; it is natural to retreat to that object to look for some sense of comfort. A child goes to his mother, a wolf retreats to it's den, a bee returns to their hive. You allowed yourself to become attached by Cortana and she was there for you every moment of the way since she chose you. Like every living creature, you must make the decision of letting Cortana go. You are only human, Master Chief, not some machine bred to fight and kill."

The SPARTAN shuddered. Cortana had mentioned something along those words, that there was a difference between a man and a machine.

"At a point in everyone's lives, we learn to let go and move on." said the General.

"General, how can I let go of Cortana? She was someone I could rely on with every step I took, watched my six, protected me." said John, "I cannot just forget everything."

General Detritus shook his head, "I never said to forget about Cortana; I said to let her go. Cortana, to many others, was a valuable asset and a very intelligent AI derived from Dr. Halsey's own mind, but as I see from your perspective, she was more than just an AI. Cortana was your only true companion. Human things, as I think, must be taught to SPARTANs for this sole reason: You believe you are no longer human, thus, the human emotion does not apply to you. This creates an ignorant mind and could very well cost you many things. This suit, for example, has highly advanced systems of which you cannot control all at once even with all proper training. Every other SPARTAN in this facility is equipped with their own compatible, intelligent AI; all of which, are currently manufactured as of this moment due to Zeta-three. Your ignorance may cost you your life, Master Chief, thus, I highly advise you to accept the suit and the AI that will be manufactured to be compatible with your technique."

The Master Chief looked at the suit with a long, hard stare.

"Yes, General."

The official showed the SPARTAN a smile, turning to the computer once

again. With the matter aside, he proceeded, "As you are aware, Cortana came from Dr. Halsey's own living tissue: her brain. When the gracious doctor, accompanied by a Noble, visited us before the spooks took her for investigation, she specifically created an AI just for you made out of her own brain once again. Before you begin to protest, Master Chief, the doctor did not create another Cortana. She made an AI similar to the one you had. A sister of her, if you wish to put her that way. She has been in 'sleep mode' for about several months and Dr. Halsey named her Maria. The systems are booting her up for docking and I suggest you step onto that panel to strip your Mark VI."

Reluctantly, the Master Chief did so and patiently remained still as the machines came online.

4. Chapter 3

****I have decided to take opportunity in this wifI so I will upload the third chapter of this story and my Lives After The End.****

****Just so everyone knows, action scenes are a butt to write! I have several Spartans introduced-all of which are my OCs-but they will not be in later chapters. They may show up when needed, but I think I will have one or two more chapters with these Spartans before they may not show up again.****

****Kudos to my reviewers!****

****I do not own Halo. Many OCs in this chapter.****

****Read and Review!****

CHAPTER THREE

****0600 Hours, November 25, 2557 (Military Calender) /****

Double Helix Star System****, Planet Symphony, On-Route to the Simulation Room Alpha-006****

The Master Chief had the Fall Out suit on and like the many routinely tests administered, he had passed with high results. Nothing was faulty or out of place and the systems ran smoothly. Maria performed internal scans and program runs to assure herself and the Master Chief that everything was in working order. Master Chief noted she was shy, unlike Cortana who immediately began a conversation. He cleared his throat, breaking their silence.

"Master Chief?" she asked, a small hint of concern in her voice.

His external speakers were offline as he replied, "Maria. I hope you understand this is not an easy task for me, having another AI assist me."

"Of course, Master Chief. Dr. Halsey gave me the basics of your history with Cortana, but I only know so much about my sister AI." Maria said, "I assume she is no longer with you, otherwise you would not need my assistance."

John grunted, "She sacrificed herself to assure that I came out

alive."

Maria paused, her voice quiet when she spoke again, "I am sorry to hear..."

"What is done is done." the SPARTAN said rougher than intended. However, he corrected himself, "This happened recently, Maria. Please pardon me if I am brute towards you; I am trying to cope."

"Not a problem, Master Chief." said Maria.

"And please, call me John, or Chief."

The AI paused, "John."

General Nakai's voice came online from the intercom, capturing the Master Chief's attention, "May the SPARTANs assigned to simulation room Alpha dash oh, oh, six, please proceed to the starting platform where you will be tested for maneuverability within your Fall Out suits."

Without another word, the Master Chief followed the other SPARTANs assigned to the simulation room. Maria had minimized the motion tracker sensors to a radius of two meters from their standard 25 meters due to their close proximity to the other SPARTANs. In time she would increase the radius. Within the current radius, FOF tags appeared on the Master Chief's HUD and the name of their branch next to them.

John noticed not all the suits were the same; some had armor modifications, such as the gunnir helmet, the enforcer helmet, tactical wrist-wear, etc. John noticed several with scout armor, EOD armor, and EVA armor with their respective helmets. John was one of the few who had no modifications on their suits-he had a standard Mark Fall Out.

"There will be a total of sixteen Spartans in this simulation including you, Chief." notified Maria. "They are equally distributed: four Spartans from each military branch."

John noted than none of them were officers, just enlisted staff. It was quite typical to see Spartans with enlisted ranks and the man had yet to see a high-ranking officer who was a Spartan in the field. He knew that the Noble Team were officers, but they had to be the only Spartans he knew of with that kind of rank.

"What kind of tasks do the different military branched Spartans perform?" asked John, external speakers offline.

Maria took a swift second to reply, "Every Spartan-regardless of their branch-has combined skills and tactics. Those associated with the Air Force and Navy are more designed to be fit in the air and sea, respectively; those in the Marine Corps and the Army are more revolved around the brute forces, the backbone. However, these Spartans are made to recognize what methods should be used in what situations."

"In other words, they are at the top of their game."

"Yes, just as all Spartans are made to be."

John took in this information as he soon met with the assigned Spartans designated to Simulation Room Alpha-006. He noticed the different variants in some of their armor: five standard Fall Out suits-including himself-, three Reconnaissance, one Scout, two Enforcers, three Operators, and two Aviators. Telling from the suits, there were six females and ten males, including John.

"Master Chief." one Spartan addressed. He was clearly male and one of the other standards; his armor sported a midnight purple main coloring with secondary frost white details. According to his FOF tag, he was part of the Army with the rank of Master Sergeant. John gave him an acknowledging nod and accepted the armored hand of the other Spartan without hesitation, "I have heard a great amount of deeds about you. Quite the experience to have been through."

"Indeed it is, Master Sergeant." there was a small pain of emotion that came from his chest, but he swiftly brushed that aside. "Unforgettable experiences, if I may add."

By this point, the other Spartans gained interest in such a legendary man, exchanging their names and ranks. Their introductions were swift as the simulation room began to buzz and the lights dimmed a significant amount.

On the intercom, General Nakai's words flowed out, "Simulation Room Alpha-006 is now active. The objective for this simulation is to eliminate Covenant forces and hostiles. Remember, Spartans, grow accustomed to your suits and trust your Artificial Intelligences."

"Master Chief." the voice of the Marine Gunnery Sergeant came into his internal speakers causing John to startle slightly.

"Yes, Gunnery Sergeant?" addressed the Master Chief, his helmet turning in the direction of the Enforcer clad Spartan.

John also noticed that the entire group of Spartans were facing him as the simulation room continued to buzz, foliage taking form and light coming from the artificial sky. The Gunnery Sergeant spoke again, "Would you like to do the honors of commanding us, Master Chief?"

The offer was expected, but it still surprised the Master Chief. Yet, he did not hesitate; it was not the first time he commanded his own team.

"Of course." John nodded.

In seconds, the entire simulation room had turned into a thick forest. The canopy covered the majority of the skies, small creaks of light seeping down to touch the moist ground. Tall trees circled around the cluster of Spartans and wildlife began to call simultaneously around them. John grabbed the standard Assault Rifle from the latches on his back and the other Spartans followed his example. His comrades were waiting for his command and the Master Chief knew this.

Maria voiced through the internal speakers in his helmet and in his mind, "I've expanded your motion sensors back to twenty-five meters

and I have conducted a scan of the area. So far no Covenant activity has been spotted and I have an idea of what this map looks like. It would be preferable if we found a high ground to grasp a vantage point of where we are and checkpoint areas for recognition."

John made a small grunt of acknowledgement before facing the gathered Spartans. He called towards the Scout, "PO2."

The Scout straightened at the abbreviation of her rank, "Yes, Master Chief?"

"Climb up the trees and see where we are. The canopy should be enough cover to shield you from any possible aerial forces." commanded the Chief.

The helmet of the Scout nodded, tucking her pistol back onto her thigh holster and she jumped for the nearest limb of the tree, expertly climbing like a monkey. She swung upwards until she reached the high canopies.

The Petty Officer's voice came from the internal speakers, "We're on a mountain side, but not too far up in elevation. The peak of the mountain is to our west and there is a clearing down to the east of our direction. Everything is covered in trees as far as the eye can see aside from that clearing. I can visibly see a cruiser in the sky, give or take four kilometers from here. It's settling a little ways away from the clearing, but it doesn't seem like they are settling directly above it."

"Is there anything else that would be significant?" asked the Master Chief, his helmet tilted upwards in the direction of the female so high up into the trees.

"The cruiser is beginning to drop several phantoms loaded with Covenant. According to my bifocals, they're full with Grunts-I see six Elites, all minors. Then there is a separate phantom carrying approximately fifteen Jackals." added the Petty Officer. "I also see a gravity lift being formed so there should be ground forces coming in soon."

John took note of this, "How many phantoms?"

The Scout replied, "Three."

"Good work, Spartan. Come back down." said the Master Chief. Seconds passed and the female Scout was down on the ground. He addressed the entire team, "With the establishment of the gravity lift, then without a doubt we should expect Hunters being deployed. Our objective is to eliminate all Covenant forces so we should destroy all ground forces before lifting into the cruiser. Recon Spartans, I want you to take point and fill us in on what is ahead of us." the Reconnaissance Spartans gave a nod in acknowledgement, their lights flicking on within John's helmet. "Operators, I want you bringing in our rear. Aviators, upon sight of possible Banshees, take to the trees and hijack for aerial support."

Acknowledge lights flickered on and the Master Chief nodded in satisfaction.

"Sir," a female Enforcer voiced and the Master Chief lifted his head

in an indication to continue, "I feel that it is necessary to add, these simulations are so real that should any one of us fall in defeat-though I do not assume will be the case-we will stay down until we all fall or the objective is completed."

John gave a nod in understanding, "Now, are we all in understanding of what is to be done. Silence all weapons until there has been return fire from the Covenant."

Once again, green lights flickered within his helmet.

The Master Chief gave the hand sign to move out and the Spartans immediately allowed the Recon Spartans ahead. The three Recon Spartans made a light jog, spanning out into a 'V' as the others filled in between with the Operators herding them.

They moved silently despite the weight of their armor. The ground was surprisingly not littered with twigs and leaves. The grass waved with the small, yet fluent breeze, swaying from side to side only to be trampled by the footfalls of the titans. John saw the three taking point become smaller the further down the mountain side they went, but the pause in their jog was evident when he received a comm from one of the females, "Master Chief, there is a drop, approximately sixty meters down."

"Is there an alternative route to get to the bottom?" asked the team leader through the comm link.

"Unless from going around a kilometer or two, no, sir." she replied.

Maria's voice piped up from the internal speakers and John's mind, "I suggest using the jetpack attachment on your suit. I can adjust the trajectory and the amount of thrust put into the exhausts of the jetpack so that it would be enough to ensure a steady negative slope down the drop-off."

John made a noise of agreement and he voiced to his team, "Listen up. We're jetpacking down the drop-off ahead. Have the AIs steady the thrust so that we have a soft fall and not skyrocket upwards."

Acknowledge lights winked on.

The Master Chief saw the three ahead jump and the unmistakable sound of their jetpacks came into his audio range. He and the other Spartans followed suit. Maria had no problem adjusting the amount of power going through his jetpack to bring the Master Chief in a steady decline until they touched down on the earth beneath them.

Once again, they were jogging until the Recon Spartans stopped a kilometer later and cowered within the brush. John's internal speakers came to life with the same Recon female's voice, "We see two of the five Elite squads coming in with their Grunts. Ten Grunts are counted in total, two Elites. By the looks of it, they're scouting for hostiles."

"Remain hidden until we are spotted. No live fire until they shoot." ordered John.

Another voice spoke up, one of the standard males, "Sir, allow me to go north. Perhaps I can grab a good vantage point to where I kill the two Elites with one sniper round."

Crockett was his name, an Army sharp-shooter if John remembered correctly. "How well are you with that weapon, Sergeant?"

"Well enough to shoot an apple out of a man's mouth without killing him." came his confident reply.

John knew one Spartan with a sharp shot. Linda. God knew where she was right now; he had not heard of her in years. Though, now was not the time to ponder. John gave Crockett the go-head and the Spartan took off with the reminder of not being spotted by the enemy. His green light winked on and John focused on the rest of his team. He gave the order to hide as best as they could. Surely enough, one by one, their entire bodies disappeared as the invisible armor ability took effect and they were transparent and hidden behind bush and tree. The scouting Covenant came into clearer view, passing the Spartans at point. John could hear them speaking in their native tongue; the Elites grunted and growled quietly to their squadron of Grunts who hissed and chirped in response. Plasma pistols and rifles were humming, ready to be fired. Their foe indicators came to life on his motion sensors and John was naturally calm. Seconds ticked by and suddenly, a sharp crack filled the air and the Elites dropped like flies, gargling on their own alien blood. The Grunts jumped and cried as John screamed down their comm line, "NOW!"

It was a blur of Spartans coming together, rounding the Grunts like cattle and executing them with a bullet to the head before any of them could activate their plasma grenades. Their deaths were swift, but John was certain that the ring of the single bullet and the shouts of the Grunts was enough for the rest of the Covenant forces to become aware of their surroundings, that there was indeed hostiles.

"All Covenant you encounter, do not hesitate to eliminate it." commanded the Master Chief. Lights flickered to life and the Spartans were moving forward with their weapons in hand.

Within several meters, they were greeted by the remaining three Elites with their squadron of Grunts. The short minions battle cried as their leaders roared for an attack.

Those at point lunged forward, their main focus on the Elites; they all knew that Grunts went haywire without their squad leader. The female Recon latched herself onto one of the Elites, grasping the creature on the shoulders as she used her jetpack thrusters to spin her onto it's back. With a swift draw of her blade, she stabbed the serrated edge into the top of it's spine and sliced up the creature's neck to the top of it's armored head. Pistol fire rang as the Grunts were executed swiftly and the gurgling cries of the two remaining Elites were heard as the Recon Spartans finished them off. John lifted his helmet, seeing Crockett return to the team and the pile of dead aliens at their feet. He gestured with his hand to keep a move on.

The Covenant, John told himself, were no longer a volatile force. What remained of them were rogues and those that still believe in the Great Journey. The actions of these false Covenant were dangerously

similar to the aliens that breathed, the aliens that the Master Chief fought and killed. He wondered how the Army General managed to create such closely real simulations, but his pondering would have to wait.

"Chief, three o'clock!" Maria cried.

The Spartan swiftly turned his head, leaning his body back to avoid being hit by a Hunter's fuel rod blast. The searing heat of the pale green plasma whizzed in front of him as John regained his footing and charged forward. The Hunter held up his armored arm, edging away from the Spartan, but the man leapt into the air as he grabbed the tip of the arm shield, spinning himself around onto the alien's back. The Hunter roared in protest and John held on firmly with one hand as he pulled out a shotgun from his subspace. He shoved the muzzle of his weapon the crook between the head and back armor, then pulled the trigger. The Hunter gave a gargling cry as it's neck fell apart in all directions. It's cry was accompanied by the shriek of a Grunt, followed by a sickening squish. John jumped off the Hunter and proceeded to join the fray of warring sides.

"Calla," called one of the Aviators to his AI, "There are Banshees in the sky. I want a jetpack boost to launch me."

"On it, Dominic." replied the AI.

The Senior Master Sergeant opened a comm to his fellow Aviator, Technical Sergeant Jesse, "Jesse, see what I see?"

The female Spartan replied, "Aye, Dom. Let's fly."

Launched upwards with a powerful thrust, both Spartans claimed a Banshee that flew like a pack in the sky. The other four Banshees peeled away as the two that were currently being hijacked were attempting to maneuver rough tricks to shake off the Spartans. Dominic pried open the Banshee, then kicked the Elite fiercely in the side; the Elite fell out with an angered cry before he landed on a Jackal underneath. The Jackal shrieked as the weight of the Elite crushed him.

"Master Chief, I have secured a Banshee." informed the Aviator clad Spartan.

Instead of replying, the acknowledge light winked on.

"Jesse." he called as he banked to the right and began to return fire on the Banshees zeroing on him.

"Right above you, Dom."

Her FOF tag signaled above him and she followed his example, firing the plasma cannons at the enemy Banshees. Dominic hit the accelerator on the Banshee, zooming past Jesse and he took aim on the Banshee in front of him. The other Elite seemed well aware he was being tailed as he began to do barrel rolls, hard bankings, and nosedives. Dominic kept up with the other Banshee, mimicking the exact maneuvers until he was close enough to take a shot. Switching from plasma turrets to fuel rod cannons, Dominic fired and landed a hit perfectly on aft, sending the Banshee to the ground like a flaming ball of fire. The Spartan banked to the side, rounding back to his comrade and the

other enemy Banshees.

He was welcomed by angry plasma fire from the remaining three enemy Banshees and he joined the female Spartan, assisting her in taking down a Banshee that was raining upon her. The Banshee went up in plasma flames before making its descent to the ground, taking a small number of ground forces with it.

"Thanks, Dom." came Jesse's voice from the male Spartan's internal speakers.

"Not a problem." he replied. "Let's rain hell."

There was a hint of a faint smile in Jesse's voice as she replied, "I couldn't agree more."

The two Banshees zoomed above the three Recon clad Spartans in the center of an angry mob of Jackals and Grunts. One of the female Spartans had a serrate-edged blade in her matte hand, preferring hand to hand combat. She moved swiftly between her comrades and enemies towards her target: a Jackal with a focus rifle. Performing agile gymnastics, the Jackal could not keep up with such fluid movement and found itself with a blade stabbed into its chest. The Recon Spartan sliced upwards with a grunt, alien blood spurting on herself and the ground around them as the upper half of the Jackal was split. Without warning, she launched her blade to her right and there was a sharp shriek before it was silenced.

"And you weren't looking." voiced her AI.

"I hardly do, Junction." she answered as she retrieved her blade from the Grunt's head within a heartbeat.

"I am always awed at your display of might, Hannah." said Junction before he added firmly, "On your six, three Jackals with shields and plasma pistols."

As swift as wind, Hannah hilted her blade and drew her plasma repeater that was latched onto her thigh, firing upon the center Jackal. She felt their plasma fire faintly bite at her shields, but the aliens had to have more power in their weapons to bring down her shields. The center Jackal soon lost his energy shield and Hannah online'd a plasma grenade, chucking it at the bird-like alien. It squawked as the blue orb latched onto its chest and within seconds, the grenade exploded; hot plasma vaporized the majority of the victimized Jackal and killed the two next to it.

The Scout's voice rang within her helmet, "Drop pods! Five of them with six Spec-Ops in each!"

As if to prove her statement, there were powerful whooshes and heavy thuds, followed by the angry cries of the Elites.

The Master Chief followed after her, "Spartan one, zero, five; eliminate as many as you can with your sniper. The rest of you, do not let them catch you from behind."

Hannah winked on her acknowledge light before focusing on the remaining horde of Grunts and Jackals.

"Hannah, I've detected explosives-" Junction was interrupted by a comm from one of the other Recon Spartans.

"First Sergeant, get out of there unless you have armor lock." said a male Spartan. "I've rigged several bodies with explosives."

"Junction, triangulate the positions of the explosives and place me in the center." she commanded. The Recon clad Spartan answered the other Marine Sergeant, "I will play as bait to herd them in. There's twenty out here."

A blip came on Hannah's HUD and she followed it, dodging the fire of the enemy weaponry.

"Wink me when you're at the center, First Sergeant, so I can detonate."

Hannah released a small huff, "Dunn, I've told you to call me Hannah." she leapt over the small group of Grunts, who squealed as they blindly fired. She crashed down to a knee, activating her acknowledge light and her armor lock a split second before the light flickered on.

The ground around her for twenty meters went up in explosions and screams of the Covenant could be heard. When the explosions were finished, Hannah's armor lock flickered offline and she was suddenly surrounded by her Recon comrades, posing as defense as her shield recharged. They found it unnecessary since they were surrounded by dead alien bodies within a twenty meter radius.

Dunn spoke again, "Sorry, First Sergeant. I am beneath your rank."

"They drilled you too hard."

"First Sergeant, we were raised together."

The third Recon motioned the other two, her voice coming through external speakers, "Spec-Ops, on our nine o'clock!"

There were five of them charging in a 'V' formation, plasma and concussion rifles firing in their direction. As the three Recon clad Spartans rolled to evade the firing, a sharp bang resonated through the air and two of the white-armored Elites collapsed. The remaining three growled loudly, swiftly moving to search for some sort of cover to hide from the unseen sniper.

"One for each of you." Sergeant Crockett's voice came through their internal speakers.

The lower ranking of the three Recon Spartans replied, "Thanks, Sergeant."

"Not a problem, Cicada." he replied.

The three Spartans charged, ammunitions firing from their weapons and lowering the energy shields of the remaining three Elites.

Once dead, a male voice rang through the Spartans' shared

communications, "PO3 Xiao, requesting assistance!"

"AFC Mah'halia, here. Where are you?" came another male voice.

The Petty Officer replied, "My AI sent you my location."

"SFC Georgia, willing to assist." a female said.

"I need all the help I can get. Wraiths are currently being dropped off. Count so far, three. The General is giving us one helluva fight!" said the Petty Officer.

Sergeant First Class replied, "I'm en route to your location, Xiao. Hang tight."

The Enforcer clad Spartan hid, keeping track of his motion sensors, analyzing where the Wraiths were currently at and waiting to see friendly blips on his motion sensor.

"Jupiter, report." he commanded.

A disembodied male voice replied through his internal speakers, "Your recharge rate dropped seventy-five percent due to the EMP blast to your pack. Subspace is functional, as are your ringlets. I also suggest you lower heart rate, Petty Officer, as it is climbing into the danger zone."

Xiao cursed as he momentarily closed his eyes and allowed five seconds to breathe evenly. He said to his AI, "Then, my shields are recharging at the rate a regular Mark suit would?"

"Yes." replied Jupiter.

Xiao cursed again.

"Petty Officer, this is the Airman First Class. You've got quite the party." said Mah'halia through their comm link.

A standard Fall-Out suit appeared from the bushes in front of Xiao's hiding place.

"My pack suffered a direct EMP blast from an overcharged plasma pistol. My functions are all normal except my recharge. I cannot fight all those Wraiths on my own without my ass being smoked." replied Xiao.

"What's the recharge rate now?"

"Times one."

Another standard suit appeared beside Mah'halia, a slimmer frame, "Tough luck, Petty Officer."

Xiao narrowed his eyes at the female, but before any of them could say something else, a Wraith began to fire it's plasma turrets at the hiding spot; thus, drew attention to the other two and did the same.

"We've got you covered. Go to Senior Airman Jean; she's a tech repair." said Mah'halia.

Xiao nodded before the two Spartans leapt into the angry fray of Wraiths with plasma pistols in their hands. The last thing Xiao saw were his comrades offlining the systems of the Wraiths before he disappeared further into the trees to search for the Senior Airman.

5. Chapter 4

****Hello everyone, so sorry for the excruciatingly long wait. I hope the length of this chapter will suffice for my absence.****

****Before I let you read, this month will be doubled up on business for me. I'm graduating high school, I'll be doing clinicals for my CNA classes, and I was recently hired at my first job.****

****I would like to give a shoutout to Noble17 for the OCs that were kindly supplied. I also have a treat for the RvB fans.****

****Please read and review! I appreciate your support!****

CHAPTER THREE

1023 Hours, November 25, 2557 (Military Calendar) /

Double Helix Star System, Planet Symphony, Simulation Room
Alpha-006

"Master Chief!"

The Spartan leaned back, narrowly avoiding the blunt of the gravity hammer as it swung across him. The brute roared as the armored man recovered from his dodge and charged forward, fist balling up and running into the brute's stomach. The creature dropped to its knees and Master Chief drew his dagger, slicing it across the brute's jugular. His head turned in the Corporal's direction. "Thank you."

Cicada nodded, leaning on her right foot and propping her rifle against her shoulder. She glanced at the brute near the Chief's feet and she mused. "This has to be the last of them. My motion scanners aren't picking up anything within 25 meters on this floor and we've picked every bone."

Maria spoke up in her carrier's internal speakers, "Chief, I've gathered heat signatures. There seems to be a multitude of brutes gathering in the command deck."

"Noted." said the Master Chief. He accessed the linked comm channel. "Spartans, they've gathered in the command deck. Let's blow this rig."

Acknowledge lights winked on and he motioned for the Corporal to follow. No less than five minutes of traveling down to the gravity lift, PO3 Xiao spoke on the comm channel, "Bombs are set, Master Chief. We all have to be off the ship in T-minus three minutes before the place blows higher than Mount Olympus."

"Acknowledged. You heard, Spartans. We need to get out of here."

It was now running against the clock to off-board the Covenant ship. With an extended Sprint capability, Master Chief and the Corporal made it to the gravity lift, meeting with several others that were making their way down.

"Seven have already dropped, Master Chief." informed the female Scout.

"Including us, is ten." At that moment, the remaining six came into view. "Alright, everyone down and out."

The last to drop was the Master Chief, but halfway through his descent, the ship above him exploded with a resonating boom and with its destruction, the gravity lift flickered and dissipated.

"Chief, we'll be approaching freefall in a matter of seconds and we have a kilometer until we reach ground." Maria informed. John had to think fast as he stared at the incoming ground; he adjusted his body so that his front was facing the ground.

"Maria, on my mark, exert all of my jetpack's power, then pressurize the gel in my suit to cushion the landing." he sensed her hesitate, but replied with an affirmation. The Spartan was silent as he focused on his altitude, barking "Now!" at 250 feet. John was lurched horizontally and towards the trees. Once the power in the jetpack was gone, he turned his back to the trees, curling into a ball. Maria took this as a sign to pressurize the gel.

The Spartans on the ground watched as their leader collided with the treetops and disappear into the forest. Immediately, they followed his trail, hearing the snapping and breaking of trees.

"Talk about dramatic landing." commented the Gunnery Sergeant.

Cicada snorted. "You think he would have had a better plan than that."

"We have to see if he made it first." said the First Sergeant, silencing any other comment; she led the group forward. Master Chief had blown down several trees, splintered logs uprooted from the ground and branches scattered in the Spartan's wake. John groaned as his suit recalibrated, the pressurized gel returning to its natural state. Maria spoke to him, but her voice fell upon ringing ears. It was until a moment later when John could finally hear her.

"Chief? Can you hear me at all?" asked Maria for what seemed like the tenth time.

John attempted to sit up, but the suit was still stiff.
"Status."

"We have landed successfully with minor injuries to the backside of the suit. You'll be stiff for another while." said Maria. John groaned as he rolled to his front, hands pressing into the ground as he moved to stand. When his suit refused to ease up, a hand was placing the man's line of sight and John accepted it without hesitation.

"Thank you."

"You're welcome, Master Chief." said the Scout.

Before anything else could be said, the General's voice boomed from above their heads. "Congratulations, Spartans. You have successfully met your objective. This simulation will end in five seconds."

"Well, it was an honor working with all of you. Especially you, Master Chief." Sergeant Crockett said. Master Chief gave him a nod.

"Thank you for having me." The forest life surrounding them began to flicker until it dissipated, the simulation room returning to its original grey room. Master Chief gave the room one look over before he asked, "Where to from here?"

The Gunnery Sergeant shrugged. "From here, we're split off. This was a test of our suits. Who we will be assigned to will be up to the Generals.

The Spartans exchanged a final parting wish before leaving the room.

Outside waiting for the Master Chief was a tall woman, a Spartan with red clad armor and white stripes. Her helmet was tucked under her arm, settling at her hip. "Master Chief, I am Danielle Dorson, Air Force Senior Airman. I have been instructed to lead you to your group."

"I have already been placed with a team?" he asked.

She nodded. "Yes, the Generals are quick in their assignments. They wanted you to be with our best Spartans."

They walked through a series of halls, passing men and women in uniforms and armor alike. The trip was silent as the two arrived. "This, Master Chief is where Spartans like to mingle. It is a large commons room with plenty of training sims, recreational fare, and so much more. Please, do not feel secluded, these Spartans are much more open when they are amongst their own. That being said, the only people allowed in here other than Spartans are the Generals and high ranking officers."

The Master Chief nodded.

The doors opened, revealing a mass of Spartans so great John nearly stumbled over his own feet. He had seen how many there were at the grand hall upon his arrival, but now he was up close with all of them. Danielle wove through the crowd of Spartans with John following closely behind. Every Spartan was equipped with new armor and it was the lively chatter amongst all of them.

"Why do they want to get rid of us? After all the work we did for them." said one male.

"Spooks will do anything because we are expendable." replied another. "If one Spartan is killed, he can be replaced. We're like dogs to them."

"They expect that a trained dog can stop hunting for game, but it can't. We live by Spartan training. We have been trained to kill aliens of mass power. I am glad Dr. Halsey thought of this because no way will I be stripped down to cannon fodder."

The Master Chief spared them a glance before looking forward, keeping a tail on Danielle.

"Grif! Hand me my shotgun! Let me teach this Blue a lesson!"

"Sarge, if you want me to give you your shotgun, you must be using a training sim." replied a Spartan in orange armor who looked bored out of his mind.

"Don't give me none of that crap, Private! Do as I say!" Sarge hollered as he held out an expectant hand for his shotgun.

"Simmons, convince him since you're such a kiss ass." Grif looked off to the side to the male next to him.

The maroon Spartan pointed at himself, giving Grif a wild look. "Me? You're the one in charge of ammunitions and weapons. You deal with it."

The teal Spartan snorted, arms crossed and looking smug. "See? You Reds argue all the time. My case stands."

"Tucker, shut the fuck up before I hold you while they punch." a blue Spartan was shaking his head, pinching the bridge of his nose. He sat on a crate, leaning forward as he gave Tucker a reprimanding look. "I might as well hand you over so that they can kick your ass."

The one named Tucker whirled on the other in alarm. "Aw, you dick!"

"I never said I was a nice person."

"But Church, you're the nicest person ever." A Spartan in a royal blue suit was clinging onto Church's arm with a smitten look on his face, raising himself to press a gentle kiss to the other man's cheek. Church spared his companion a glance, returning the kiss to which Tucker and the Reds gagged. Master Chief had to stop to make sure he was seeing correctly. In all of his years, he had never seen this before amongst the Spartan ranks.

"He's only nice wherever you're concerned, Caboose." Tucker remarked. "He's always an ass towards me and the Reds."

"I would rather be an ass than be kissed by another guy." muttered Sarge.

"You're already an ass."

"What was that, Grif?"

Grif sighed in agitation. "You're already an ass, sir."

"Much better, Private."

Simmons arched a brow in the Master Chief's direction. "Can we help you?"

John cleared his throat. "Pardon, I did not mean to intrude."

"By all means, take me away from these lunatics." Grif piped up.

"Shut up, Grif. If you leave, who will be my punching bag?" silenced Sarge.

Master Chief arched a brow from beneath his helmet. He didn't know what to say before Danielle came to his rescue. "Pay them no mind, Master Chief. They are our lower operatives in this organization." This erupted a protest from the two teams as she pulled John along. "Never talk to those Spartan whackjobs."

"Noted." he offlined his external speakers. "Maria, who were they?"

Maria took a moment before responding. "They are, as what Danielle Dorson stated, low level operatives used to test the Freelancer program that has long been out of commission. They are the Red and Blue teams assigned to Blood Gulch. The Red team is composed of Sarge, Dick Simmons, Dexter Grif, and Franklin Delano Donut; the Blue team is composed of Leonard Church, Lavernius Tucker, Michael Caboose, and occasionally a Freelancer known as Agent Texas would join them. Unfortunately, Agent Texas is KIA."

"Why are they-"

"Unlike most Spartans?"

"Yes."

"Despite that they received the same training and augmentations, they scored the lowest and were sent away. Therefore, their lame capabilities only worsened. As you have witnessed, they are quite the interesting group."

John grunted.

"Master Chief." spoke Danielle. Said Spartan focused forward. "This is our team."

Six other Spartans looked up from their mingle in the direction. Two other females and four males in total. One male came forward, his grey eyes looking past John's visor. John's HUD beeped, his eyes sparing a glance at the indicator. The man was an officer. Crisp, his hand came up in a salute. "Sir."

The officer returned the salute before he dropped it to his side with the Master Chief following suit. "Master Chief, it is an honor to meet you. I am Frank Lennox, Marine Corps Lieutenant First Class. The team calls me Ghost, but you can address me by name, rank, or nickname." The Master Chief nodded in understanding.

"Don't be shy to the team, Master Chief. You have already met Dani." he held out a directing hand in the direction of the woman beside the Master Chief.

John nodded. "Yes, sir, I have."

"Meet Marine Sergeant Major Gavin Smith, my second in command on this team." Frank's hand went to the bald headed Spartan sitting on a crate, leaning forward and resting his arms on his thighs. His armor was an overall slate grey scheme, decorated in secondary purple. Gavin grunted in greeting, nodding his head. The Master Chief returned the nod.

"Nice to meet you, Master Chief. I hear great things from you."

"I am honored, Sergeant Major."

"Please, Master Chief. The honor is mine." Gavin smiled.

A female Spartan moved forward, her armor an off-shade of white and flush pink details; her long, blonde hair swaying. Her light blue eyes raising to meet his visor. "I am Air Force Staff Sergeant Sophie White."

"Marine Gunny Diego Gomez." said another male in forest green and black clad armor, voice rich in a Spanish accent. He flashed a grin in the Master Chief's direction. "The team calls me Loco."

"Only because you go hoppy-bunny with shotguns, you little bulltrue." snorted Gavin. Diego shrugged.

"Which can get you killed." replied the second female curtly, sparing the Marine a glare. The woman's armor was jet black with secondary white. Her gaze went to the Master Chief. "I am Army Corporal Chloe Jones."

"Be careful of her, Em-Ce. She can figure out how to kill you in your sleep faster than you can breathe." teased Diego. Chloe glared at the man again.

"Gunny. Shut up." Frank said with a frown. Said man chuckled softly to himself before falling silent. Frank's gaze went from the Marine back to John. "Lastly, is Army Private First Class Jack Johnson. Big Guy here isn't much of a talker to newbies. Not that you're a rookie in any sense, Master Chief."

"I understand, sir." nodded John. Jack was a tall man, built thick in muscle mass. The Master Chief took notice in the scar embedded from his lip to chin and Jack glared at the other for staring.

He made it known. "It's rude to stare."

Volatile instincts buried within the Master Chief broiled in challenge, but Frank beat him to it. "Easy, Big Guy. Master Chief means you no harm."

Green eyes burned through the visor. Jack harumphed. "Call me if you need me. I'm getting a drink."

That said, the Private stood up and walked off towards the cafeteria within the commons room.

"Don't mind him, Master Chief. He's a loose cannon." said Frank once

the large man was out of Spartan hearing range. "Give him time, he'll come around."

"Noted, sir."

1357 Hours, November 25, 2557 (Military Calendar) /

Double Helix Star System, Planet Symphony, Galaxy Map Room

"Well, well. Long time, no see, Master Chief." at the sound of her voice, Master Chief turned in her direction, giving her a crisp salute. She returned it, face serious as ever before it fell into an inviting expression as her hand returned to her side.

"Commander Palmer." The female stepped forward, smiling warmly. "I did not know you were sent here."

"When Dr. Halsey says 'git', you have no choice, but to 'git.' That woman knows how to command us around." the commander's face fell, morphing into a look of hate. Her eyes narrowed, looking past the Master Chief as her eyes unfocused. "Those bastards. They get rid of her, then think that we will be easy to strip down."

"I know, Commander. I saw Dr. Halsey last. Believe me when I say she did not look pleased in the least."

"Knowing her, she doesn't want us to engage the UNSC directly. It'll happen, Master Chief. UNSC has great power and they will do whatever they can to dismantle the entity of the Spartan program. It is up to us to keep the program going for as long as a Spartan lives."

"I agree, Commander."

"Generals on deck!" at the command, Frank's team and Sarah Palmer snapped to attention as the four Generals entered the Galaxy Map room.

"At ease, Spartans." said General Detritus. The three men and woman walked past the Spartans, semi-circling the large Galaxy Map console. The four Generals glanced between each other before turning their gazes towards the Spartans. "If we are to avoid any confrontation with the UNSC, then we must rally everyone and depart within the next hour. That being said, we must move double time."

"Where we will be going is a distant star system." General Nakai said as she brought the holographic map to life. Tiny glowing orbs in the shape of stars and planets danced around in front of the Generals and Spartans as the Asian woman inputted the coordinates. "It is on the edge of both UNSC and Covenant jurisdiction. Until we decide how to deal with ONI, we will remain in hiding. When we have a plan, we will go against them. This will go two ways: ONI and the UNSC will keep the Spartan program or we are forced to eradicate them."

General Yanskee continued. "Should the circumstances fall to the latter and not former, then we must be prepared for any whiplash the general public will place upon us. It is no longer a matter of humankind as a whole. Spartans stand apart from the general military and civilian life. As you all know, you have been made for conflict. Granted, humankind is known for conflict, but you all have adapted to war."

"There will be a time when humans will fight either against themselves or another alien force. or maybe something bigger. Whatever it may be, we must be prepared."

Commander Palmer spoke next with a firm tone. "I assure you, Generals, my Spartans will always be prepared for whatever comes our way."

End
file.